

Speech on the Attitude to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

April 25 (May 8)

Minutes

The materials submitted by comrades on the activity of the Soviets, while being incomplete, are remarkably interesting. This may be the most important information material produced by the conference, material which makes it possible to verify our slogans against the actual course of life. The picture we now have disposes us to optimistic conclusions. The movement started out in the centres; initially all the energy of the proletariat there was concentrated on the struggle. A mass of energy was spent on the struggle against tsarism. This struggle in Petrograd has eliminated the central state power. A gigantic task has been done. But if that has led to the seizure of power by the bourgeoisie it does not warrant any pessimistic conclusions, it is not right to regard the workers' failure to take power as a mistake. It would be utopian to suppose that after a few days of struggle the masses could have taken power into their hands. That could not have been done in the presence of the bourgeoisie, which was very well prepared for taking over.

From the centre, the revolution is moving into the localities. That is what happened in France—the revolution is becoming a municipal one. The movement in the localities shows that there the majority is for the peasants, for the workers, that there has been the least leadership from the bourgeoisie, that there the masses did not lose their head. The more data we collect, the more they show us that the greater the proletarian section of the population and the fewer the intermediate elements, the better the revolution advances in the localities. The Kazan comrades have gone over directly to the tasks of the socialist revolution. We find that even where the proletariat's organisations are insignificant, the practical requirements have given the proletariat an absolutely correct definition of its tasks. Without such elements as, for instance, statistics, etc., the proletarian revolution cannot be carried out. For the proletarian revolution to be carried out, it is necessary that the

engineers, technicians, etc., should be under the practical control of the revolutionary proletariat. The revolution in the localities has gone forward easily. There is always the danger of anarchy in a revolution. Over here anarchy is not....^[1]

The bourgeois revolution is unmindful of production, but here the workers are giving it thought. The workers are interested in seeing that production does not dwindle. The revolution in the localities is going forward in gigantic strides. Reports from the localities have shown that the sharper the class contradictions, the more correctly the revolution advances, the surer the dictatorship of the proletariat is realised. While the dictatorship of the proletariat is being implemented in the small localities, the centres turn out to be the least suitable for the revolution's advance.

There is absolutely no ground for any pessimism. It is a fact that collaboration with the bourgeoisie is beginning in the centres. Through its better organisation, the bourgeoisie is trying to turn the proletariat into a servitor, to make the workers temporary participants in what the bourgeoisie is building. It is ridiculous to think that the Russian people are drawing their guiding principles from pamphlets. Not at all, it is from the immediate practice that the experience of the masses flows....^[2] The people can work it out by participating in a mass movement. The people themselves have started to accumulate mass experience....^[3] In Penza Gubernia, the power took shape under the dictatorship of the peasantry. The Penza representative showed the resolutions of the peasants who had taken over the implements of production and land. Marx's words are being confirmed....^[4] The programme of the revolution is being carried out in the localities—in order to have grain ...^[5] to establish relations themselves. This revolution produces men of practice. The revolution can go forward only under the control of practical experience in the localities. And we are very greatly encouraged by the course of the revolution throughout the whole of Russia, where the gigantic majority are peasants.

After there proved to be insufficient strength to take over production in the centre, this is being done in the provinces, where it is easily done. In the provinces, the revolution is a municipal one, and it is giving impetus to the centre; the latter is picking up their experience.

The comrade coal-miner said that their first task when...^[6] was to go for grain.... It is wrong to think that this experience can go to waste. Without this experience, the centres have nowhere to get an impetus from for a fresh revolution. The new revolution is mounting. The course of events, the dislocation of life, the famine—that is what is propelling the revolution. Hence the struggle against the elements supporting the bourgeoisie. Things are moving towards a collapse which the

bourgeoisie will not cope with. We are preparing a new multimillion army which could show its mettle in the Soviets, in the Constituent Assembly—just how, we do not as yet know. Over here in the centre we do not have enough strength. There is a tremendous preponderance in the provinces. On our side is the development of the revolution in the localities, which is going forward and overtaking us.

The people are not setting themselves any communist plans. The revolutionary class throughout Russia is mustering its forces, and it is our task to accumulate this experience and take a step as these forces are mustered. We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by the fact that they (Narodniks, Mensheviks) are in such an overwhelming majority.

On the strength of the experience, we can now state in the resolution....^[7] In the localities, the production has to be taken over, otherwise the collapse is inevitable. The peasants will not give the grain. To obtain the grain, the measures must be revolutionary, which can be put through by the revolutionary class, relying on the masses in their millions.

I asked comrades from the localities about the state of production there.

The 8 – hour day has been introduced in Nizhny Novgorod Gubernia, and production has increased. That is the earnest. There is no other way of escaping the ruin. It will take a vast amount of work. We are separating ourselves from the petty-bourgeois line. Life is on our side. The crisis cannot be resolved by petty-bourgeois-democratic methods, because they stop short of revolutionary measures (Shingaryov, Milyukov). The general course of the revolution shows that things are moving forward.

We do not differ from the petty bourgeoisie in that it says “caution”, and we say “speed”; we say “even more caution”. There must be a relentless struggle against this state game....^[8] Better later than earlier – and the centre will win out. (Applause.)

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